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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006706

SIPDIS

EUR FOR DAS BRYZA, AND EUR/SE SILLIMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SY](#) [TU](#) [SYRIA](#)

SUBJECT: FM GUL PLANS TO VISIT SYRIA TO URGE COOPERATION

REF: MCELDOWNEY - BRYZA TELCON 11/14/05

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

1. (C) Summary and Action Request. MFA Middle East DG Oguz Celikkol called in CDA November 14 to inform her that FM Gul plans to travel to Damascus on Wednesday, November 16, for a focused, three-hour visit with the purpose of encouraging Syrian President Bashar al-Asad to cooperate with the UNIIIC, as well as to prevent the entry of terrorists from Syria into Iraq and to cease support to Islamic Jihad. While in Bahrain, Gul was reportedly encouraged by UK FM Straw, EU's Solana, and Arab counterparts to consider ways Turkey could be helpful with Syria. Celikkol noted Syrian FM al-Shara had made conciliatory statements in Bahrain suggesting Syria was ready to cooperate on providing access to persons of interest to the Mehlis Commission. CDA noted Secretary Rice's earlier request to Gul that Turks not/not meet with Syrians at a high level and cautioned that such a visit could be misperceived by the international community, and manipulated by the Syrians. CDA advised that, if Gul nonetheless insists on going to Damascus, the MFA should make it absolutely clear -- publicly and in advance -- that Gul will demand Syrian cooperation with UNSCR 1636 as well as better Syrian behavior on Iraq and Palestine. Action Request: Post requests Department guidance on Gul's proposed visit as well as any specific points for MFA by OOB November 15. End Summary and Action Request.

2. (C) DG Celikkol told CDA that, while in Bahrain, Gul had met with U.S. officials as well as with UK Foreign Secretary Straw, the EU's Solana, and Arab counterparts, who all encouraged Turkey to consider ways to help break the deadlock with Syria over cooperation with the Mehlis Commission (UNIIIC) under UNSCR 1636. Moreover, Celikkol reported, Syrian FM al-Shara had shown up unexpectedly in Bahrain and had made surprisingly conciliatory statements indicating Syrian willingness to make persons of interest to the UNIIIC available at a UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) facility or at an Arab League facility outside of Syria and Lebanon. According to Celikkol, Gul made the decision to go to Syria only upon his return to Ankara from Bahrain.

3. (C) Celikkol said Gul's visit to Damascus, scheduled for the afternoon of Wednesday, November 16, would be short (three hours or less), devoid of protocol, and focused entirely on a meeting with al-Asad (and perhaps al-Shara) to press the Syrians to cooperate with the Mehlis Commission. With key U.S. concerns in mind, Celikkol said, Gul would also urge the Syrians to prevent the entry of foreign fighters into Iraq via the Damascus International Airport as well as the land border, and to cease support for Islamic Jihad. Gul is willing to convey other U.S. messages to Syria as well. Finally, Gul plans to encourage al-Asad to move forward on domestic political reforms.

4. (C) The MFA does not plan to go public with the visit until the day of Gul's departure, when it will make a straightforward statement of Gul's mission. Celikkol elaborated that Gul believes his mission is urgent and necessary to break the political deadlock over UNSCR 1636. Should the Syrians fail to cooperate with UNIIIC before December 15, the MFA is convinced the targeted sanctions that will likely go into place will not be effective. The MFA also fears a broader embargo against Syria will not be sustainable. Celikkol explained the broader MFA concern, reinforced by Gulf state FMs to Gul, that continued Syrian isolation would only bring Damascus under increasing Iranian influence. Gul's conclusion is that Syria must see that there is still time to "do the right thing," Celikkol said.

5. (C) CDA reminded Celikkol of the Secretary's earlier -- and quite explicit -- request to Gul that Turkey not/not meet with Syrian officials at a high level. In that context, she could not predict USG support for Gul's mission. She undertook to request Department guidance and respond to the MFA in short order. Should the trip proceed nonetheless, she urged Celikkol to consider a very forceful public statement of intent upon Gul's departure, making clear that Gul will tell the Syrians categorically that they must cooperate with the Mehlis Commission, stop entry of terrorists into Iraq, cease support for Palestinian extremist groups, and act more responsibly in the region. Gul's trip, in short, must be perceived as in full harmony with the international

community's goals for drastically improved Syrian behavior in the region. Asad should not gain the impression he can wait out his difficulties. Celikkol took the point, saying any MFA statement would be made in "diplomatic" terms but would clearly convey Gul's purpose. He said the MFA would await a formal response from Washington, both on the trip itself and on any specific points the USG may wish Gul to raise.

MCELDOWNEY